

COMPREHENSIVE SUSTAINABLE ENERGY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes (Final)

January 6, 2015

Pursuant to a notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, a meeting of the Comprehensive Sustainable Energy Committee was held on Tuesday, January 6, 2015 at 7:30 pm at the Harvey Wheeler Community Center. Present were Committee members Jill Appel (co-chair), Gordon Brockway, Sue Felshin, Gilda Gussin, Jane Hotchkiss (co-chair), Bill Lehr (new member), Mark Myles and Alan Whitney (clerk); committee. Also present were Jan Aceti (CMLP Energy Conservation Coordinator), Sagewell, Inc. representative Tim D'Souza, and Concord resident Bradley Hubbard-Nelson.

CSEC membership

Bill Lehr was welcomed as a new member of CSEC. Ruthie Bennett has resigned from CSEC but is still interested in contributing. The committee now has one opening and three applications for membership. Ms. Appel and Ms. Hotchkiss will follow up.

Meeting minutes

Consideration of minutes was delayed until the next meeting.

Upcoming Committee Meetings

The next CSEC meetings are scheduled for January 20, 2015 and February 10, 2015.

Greening Your Heat Program

Almost the entire meeting was dedicated to discussion of the Greening Your Heat contract and related issues.

Programmable Thermostats

In general, Sagewell has been looking to more or less follow the MassSave program model because contractors are familiar with it, though the MassSave model for PTs may not be suitable for GYH. In the MassSave model, contractors typically just leave a PT with the homeowner without installing; in this way, contractors avoid responsibility for homeowner problems with PT. However, many MassSave customers have never have their PT programmed (despite the fact that MassSave pays \$65 for installation labor), in large part because many homeowners are uncomfortable programming a PT. Additionally, MassSave prescribes a PT model that is judged by some to be high-priced and poor quality.

Mr. D'Souza also stated that the GYH weatherization contractors are not qualified or comfortable handling more than a simple PT installation. Ms. Appel stated the importance of educating people about the value of PTs, perhaps best covered in the associated GYH FAQ (discussed later in the meeting), and perhaps in personal follow-up to weatherization installation. Ms. Hotchkiss suggested that perhaps a 'Program Your PT' evening program, or some such, might be held to which homeowners are invited or there could be a student-driven effort to help people program their PTs.

After considerable discussion, it was decided that the GYH contractors should be mandated to:

1. Determine whether a home represents a good PT opportunity.
2. Quote to the homeowner a price to install a PT.
3. Install a PT but leave programming up to the homeowner.

Homeowners need to know that CSEC strongly recommends the use of PTs; GYH marketing materials need to make sure that this message is strongly communicated to homeowners, even though the GYH program will not offer a separate incentive for PTs.

Contractors will be told that GYH won't pay above MassSave rates for sealing and insulation. There will be no specific PT model specified for installation with the understanding that the contractor will choose the best

model for the home. Additionally, CSEC will monitor contractor PT-install prices for reasonableness; customer will be responsible for programming the PT.

Mr. Brockway asked what will be cut from a contractor proposal if the price is too high for the homeowner. Mr. D'Souza stated that contractors make their money on insulation and air sealing, and that the PT is small change to them, so PT likely will be the first thing to go.

In order to encourage installation of PTs, CSEC could reach out to the Concord community with a 'help desk' or workshop that might include some instruction in PT programming; also possibility for high-school students to become involved.

Mr. Lehr asked about the possibility of obtaining quantity discounts for PTs. Mr. D'Souza responded that significant quantity discounts can be had only if buying thousands of units.

GYH contractor vetting

Mr. D'Souza stated that Sagewell engages only reputable program contractors with whom they have had experience or that have been highly recommended. Sagewell depends on the integrity of these selected contractors and does not require not require a warranty by the contractor to homeowners.

Information Sharing

Mr. D'Souza stated that Sagewell has agreed to provide CSEC with all information that CSEC has requested, but that certain homeowner information is considered private, for which Sagewell is under a non-disclosure agreement via the contract; particularly sensitive are the infra-red home images, which could influence home market values. Mr. D'Souza emphasized that homeowner's expectation is that, in general, their private information will not be shared. Mr. Lehr suggested that no personally-identifiable homeowner information should be shared. Mr. D'Souza indicated that some personally-identifiable information must be shared with CMLP in order to verify homeowner qualification for rebates.

GYH Program Procedures

Mr. D'Souza stated that, from experience, the basic procedure for the oil-heated homes with the greatest heat loss is to do the following:

1. Identify the 100 most leaky homes (from infra-red imaging results), which Sagewell has already done.
2. Notify the associated homeowners via letter with a Town seal without identifying them as the homes with greatest heat loss
3. People who want weatherization will do it; there is no assurance that all these homes will be weatherized

Mr. Lehr moved that rebates will be issued on a first-come/first-serve basis. Mr. Whitney seconded. The motion passed on a vote of seven to one.

Program Rules

About 150 rebates can be issued by the GYH program. The program will be framed as being for oil, propane and electrically-heated homes.

A proposed set of Program Rules drafted by Sagewell and the GYH subcommittee was discussed:

1. Mr. D'Souza stated that an eligible weatherization must not be part of a home renovation because weatherization is already required by building codes.
2. In order to reduce the risk of fraudulent claims from homeowners who use their own contractors or contractors who might submit bills for non-existent homeowners, the following comments were made:
 - a. Mr. Brockway suggested that people who use their own contractor must agree to a post-weatherization inspection; photos of installation could also be required. The consensus was that

contractors and homeowners should be notified that the Town of Concord reserves the right to inspect the work.

- b. Rebates will not be paid for do-it-yourself weatherization, although homeowners who are licensed contractors may follow the “your own contractor” path.
- c. Ms. Aceti suggested that a paid invoice from a homeowner would be required to be submitted before a rebate would be issued. The contractor bill must be on company letterhead and contain the contractor’s license number. The homeowner’s CMLP account # must be included.
- d. Homeowners who use a program contractor will pay through Sagewell. If paid by credit card, homeowners will be responsible for paying credit card fee.

FAQ and Program Marketing

Ms. Appel reiterated the importance of reaching out to everyone, including natural gas customers. If GYH marketing plan targets all homeowners, including natural gas users, and NG users utilize the MassSave route, we can take credit for those.

The FAQ must take the broad view including all homeowners regardless of heating-system type. FAQ should explain difference between weatherization assessment and comprehensive energy audit.

Sagewell is working on a website that will be the portal to the GYH program. Natural gas customers will be immediately directed to MassSave. Eligible homeowners will be invited to schedule a weatherization audit on-line. Ms. Gussin stated that for program evaluation purposes, CSEC needs both a way to capture how a homeowner heard about the program (e.g. via the website) and a way to capture how many homeowners with natural gas heat are seeking audits and weatherization.

Sagewell has lined up three ‘official’ program contractors. The question arose about whether a homeowner could use their own contractor. After much discussion, there appeared to be a consensus that such a contractor could be used and a rebate would be paid provided that:

1. Work is performed only on non-NG homes.
2. The contractor is qualified and suitably licensed for the type of work to be done.
3. Work must be done according to same schedule and rules as apply to program contractors.

Ms. Gussin asked for the creation of a small sub-committee to complete a review of the proposed GYH marketing plan prior to the January 20 CSEC meeting. Mr. Myles, Mr. Lehr and Ms. Appel volunteered, subject to schedule constraints. A need also exists to create a plan for marketing GYH to affinity groups.

The January 20th CSEC meeting will focus on the GYH marketing plan. The goal is to kick off the program with the Concord Journal article on January 29th.

Action Items

Ms. Hotchkiss will draft a letter to target homeowners, to be mailed January 29th,

Mr. D’Souza will update the GYH Program Rules and FAQs and redistribute to the subcommittee for review.

Ms. Gussin will draft a GYH article for the Concord Journal, to be published in advance of sending letters to the top 100 leaky homes. The communication will describe the GYH program as including all homes in town, with new incentives for oil, propane and electric-heated homes. Homeowners whose homes are heated with natural gas will be directed to MassSave.

Tufts University Heat Pump Project

Mr. Brockway gave a brief update of the heat-pump project being conducted in collaboration with Tufts University:

1. 25 students have signed up for the class, commencing in the semester starting mid-January 2015.

2. Tufts has requested that representatives of CSEC meet with the class both at the beginning and end of the semester. Several CSEC members expressed interest attending such meetings with the students, the first of which is scheduled for January 28.

Proposed Letter From CSEC Regarding Junction Village

The committee briefly discussed the draft of the letter. Members requested that Ms. Felshin split the letter into a brief cover memo and an attachment listing the suggestions for sustainability. Also, a clear statement on what the committee wants to happen should be added. The Junction Village letter will be covered first on the agenda at the January 20th meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Alan Whitney, clerk